



# NEWS RELEASE

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Release No. 0384.04

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## **VENEMAN ANNOUNCES NEARLY \$80 MILLION TO IMPROVE RURAL COMMUNITY WATER/WASTE SYSTEMS**

### *Funding to Benefit 38 Communities in 25 States*

WASHINGTON, Sept. 14, 2004 -- Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced the approval of nearly \$80 million in loan and grant funds to assist 38 rural communities in 25 states improve their water/wastewater infrastructure. The funds will be used by rural communities to provide clean, safe drinking water and sanitary wastewater disposal.

“The Bush Administration understands that for a community to improve its economic opportunity and quality of life, basic community infrastructure is essential,” said Veneman. “These funds will help improve the health and safety of America’s rural communities.”

In **North Dakota**, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of Fort Yates received a funding package of \$2.5 million (loan \$1.5 million/grant \$1 million) to develop a water supply and distribution system to serve the residents of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

“This is another example of the commitment that President George W. Bush and the Bush Administration have to the future of rural America,” said ND USDA Rural Development State Director, Clare Carlson.

Veneman cited Polk County in rural Tennessee as an example of how the funds will play a significant role in improving the quality of life for area residents. Polk County requested funds to construct six miles of water lines in the Isabella area of eastern Polk County and in the City of Ducktown where 81 residential users have struggled with contaminated water wells. The funds will allow those residents to connect to a safer and more reliable source of water.

Funding for the 38 projects is comprised of \$60.5 million in loans and \$19.3 million in grants and will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the loan and grant agreements. A complete list of the selected loan and grant recipients and projects can be found at:

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/news.htm>

Veneman said that since the beginning of the Bush Administration, USDA Rural Development has funded \$6.3 billion in loans and grants to assist communities in the construction or improvement of over 4,000 water or wastewater systems, benefiting more than 2.7 million people living in rural areas.

Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development and critical community and technology infrastructure. Additional information about rural programs is available at the local USDA Rural Development office or on USDA's Web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

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